

26. There has been no alterations in Colman's goods for the last twenty years?—Colman's mustard in half-pound tins is not much good to the retailer.

27. Colman's mustard has not been altered by the manufactures for twenty years; yet the price has advanced in this market, in spite of the fact that 2d. duty has been taken off?—Colman's mustard advanced some time ago. I put the price up; also the price of Robertson's groats. I arranged with some of the principal grocers that the price should be put up. I was only too pleased to get it put up, because the stuff was not worth handling.

28. *Mr. Macdonald.*] We cannot get that from you as to whether the manufacturers have put the price up—the price to the merchants?—I cannot tell you whether the manufacturers have put the price up. I do not buy the stuff.

29. *Mr. Robertson.*] All that you know is the price that the merchants are charging the grocers?—Yes.

Additional Written Statement forwarded by Witness.

I would point out that the Merchants' Association had refused to charge a higher commission to the country storekeepers for selling eggs; the merchants were keeping the price down, and therefore could not be placing the public at a disadvantage.

Mr. Fairbairn is aware that Colman's mustard can be procured outside of the Merchants' Association, as the firm of Fairbairn, Wright, and Co. sell Colman's goods.

The Merchants' Association did not tariff Colman's goods. I enclose copy of a price-list, including Colman's mustard, which I was successful in arranging with the members of the retail grocery trade.

“ OTAGO MASTER GROCERS' ASSOCIATION.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ 4th November, 1910.

“ Please note that from Monday, 7th November, 1910, the following lines will not be retailed less than—Colman's mustard, 1 lb., 1s. 6d. per tin; $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., 9d. per tin; $\frac{1}{4}$ lb., 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per tin. Farrow's mustard, 1 lb., 1s. 6d. per tin; $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., 9d. per tin; $\frac{1}{4}$ lb., 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per tin. Rob. patent groats, 9d. per tin; Rob. patent barley, 9d. per tin; pine-apples, 2 lb., 7d. per tin; pine-apples, cubes, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., 6d. per tin.—Yours faithfully,

“ ALEXR. B. MERCER, Secretary.”

I enclose copy of agreement signed by 152 members in the grocery trade.

“ THE GROCERS' MUTUAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION.

“ October, 1909.

“ We whose signatures are attached undertake, in each and every case where the account of a customer is so far overdue or shall have reached so unsafe a limit that we find it necessary to stop the credit of the customer, to notify immediately the secretary of the association of which we hereby declare ourselves members, in order that such manifestations may be confidently imparted to every other member of the association for the protection of the said members against fraud and imposition.—[Signed by 152 grocers in town and suburbs].

After I stated that I had been told that Keiller's marmalade had advanced *Mr. Fairbairn* is reported stating, “ There has been no alteration in Keiller's marmalade for years.” This is contrary to fact, for Keiller's marmalade was advanced in price by the manufacturers some months ago about 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

ROBERT BREEN, Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, Dunedin, examined on oath.
(No. 25.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, Dunedin?—Yes.
2. Do you come as a representative of the Trades Council to speak on certain subjects?—I do.
3. You know that we are a Commission to inquire into the rise in the cost of living. Could you make any statement on the subject?—There are only two matters in connection with what is set out in the scope of the Commission that I would like to speak of. The first is as to what effect, if any, labour legislation has had in increasing the price of the commodities of life; and, second, as to what steps should be taken with a view of reducing the cost of the necessities of life. I do not know what the mind of the Commission is, but from my reading of the newspapers during the last two or three days I have come to the conclusion that it has been discovered by the employers themselves that there has been an increase in the cost of living. Therefore, I take it that it is not necessary for me to make any statement as to whether there has been an increase or not. I am prepared to assume that there has been an increase. The only thing I wish to refute is a statement made by certain witnesses that the Arbitration Court awards have been responsible, to a certain extent at all events, by increasing wages. Of course, there are a number of things that directly concern the cost of commodities. The main thing that I wish to give evidence on is as to labour. There is at the present time a union of butchers' assistants. There is also a union of journeymen bakers, and a union of grocers' assistants. There is a union of butchers connected with the abattoirs—that is, those engaged in killing meat for local consumption. They are classed under the Slaughtermen's Union. There is also a Flour-millers' Union. Those unions are all connected with work that has to do with the necessities of life. I want to say that during the last ten years the butchers have received no increase in wages; the bakers have received no increase; the millers have received no increase. The butchers at the abattoirs have received an increase of 5s. a week, which would affect about fifteen men.

4. Can you give us an idea of what that would mean per pound of meat?—Not for this year, but I can give you the figures for 1910–11. The figures are contained in the report of the Town Clerk of Dunedin in connection with the stock slaughtered at the abattoirs for twelve months.

5. When did the 5s. rise come into effect?—I think, about twelve months ago. I do not know whether it would cover the whole of the period from March, 1910, to March, 1911. It would cover a portion of that period.

6. What is the approximate weight of meat slaughtered in a week?—I cannot say, but I may point out that 5s. a week increase to the wages of fifteen men would represent about £195 for the year.